

# Gulf, Gadsden, Liberty, and Franklin Counties Announce the Establishment of the Gulf to Gadsden Freight Logistics Zone

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**Hosford, FL-August 15, 2017.** Gulf, Gadsden, Liberty, and Franklin Counties announce the establishment of the Gulf to Gadsden Freight Logistics Zone (FLZ). A FLZ is a grouping of activities and infrastructure associated with freight transportation and related services that can become a platform for broader economic development. Establishment of the FLZ can provide the counties with priority for funding and incentives from the State when pursuing certain projects within the FLZ. The four counties created a strategic plan for the attraction of business to the zone that was accepted by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners in each county.

“The new Freight Logistics Zone will connect communities, improve infrastructure for freight transportation and strongly impact the local economies,” said Florida Department of Economic Opportunity Executive Director Cissy Proctor. “We are proud to work with this team to create a positive effect on economic development and job growth across these counties.”

Gadsden, Liberty Franklin and Gulf counties share a common transportation asset in the Apalachicola Northern Railway, owned by St. Joe Company and operated by a subsidiary of Genesee & Wyoming Inc. The railroad connects the Port of Port St. Joe in Gulf County with the CSX Class I railroad in Gadsden County, thereby providing for the movement of goods across the nation. A number of industrial sites have been identified and qualified by Enterprise Florida’s Strategic Sites program along the railroad and proximate to additional transportation assets. Interstate 10 and major arterial roads like Highways 65, 71 and US 98 together with the Apalachicola Regional Airport in Franklin County comprise a transportation network that is valuable to the growing industries of transportation, logistics, manufacturing and distribution.

“We are delighted about this partnership between several counties in North Florida to establish the Gulf to Gadsden Freight Logistics Zone,” said Senator Bill Montford. “It will provide a much-needed boost for our rural counties and with our local leadership, I am confident we will be successful in providing more job opportunities and a better local economy.”

“When we see leaders at the city, county and state levels join forces with the private sector, the greatness that can be accomplished becomes evident,” said State Representative Halsey Beshears. “What this partnership and naming of this new zone means to this area is immeasurable and I look forward to seeing the positive impacts for years to come.”

“Working together to find ways to stimulate our local economies is a priority across the board,” said State Representative Ramon Alexander. “Partnerships such as these lead to new jobs and opportunities for the hard-working citizens of this region and position us as a key player in industry growth.”

"Enhancing transportation infrastructure is important to promoting economic development," Gretna Mayor Anthony J. Baker said. "The FLZ strategic plan describes areas where infrastructure investment is essential. I look forward to working with the State of Florida to facilitate economic development and job growth by way of the FLZ in Gretna and throughout the zone."

“Enterprise Florida’s Rural Area of Opportunity Strategic Sites program is an important component for Liberty County as we prepare our sites to take advantage of the AN Railroad,” emphasized Dexter Barber, Liberty County Board of County Commissioners Chairman.

Joseph "Smokey" Parrish, Chairman of the Franklin County Board of County Commissioners stated, "We are happy to be working with the other counties to create a transportation and logistics hub that will facilitate growth and economic development in our region. We are working to position the Apalachicola Regional Airport as a strategic asset in the FLZ."

Gulf County Board of County Commissioners Chairman Ward McDaniel said, "We are proud to see this effort come to fruition. The alignment of sea, air, rail and interstate around a common strategy will prepare this region for the much-anticipated economic growth."

"The four counties in the FLZ have tremendous potential for economic development and job growth" said Jorge Gonzalez, CEO of The St. Joe Company. "With the proper infrastructure in place, the Port of Port St. Joe can leverage the benefit of its proximity to rail, air, and interstate transportation assets. We are committed to working with the counties to improve transportation connectivity and propelling growth throughout the FLZ."

Kevin Phillips, AVP Industrial Development for Genesee & Wyoming explained, "The FLZ region has natural transportation and logistics advantages that we need to maximize and use to attract additional jobs and prosperity to the region. The FLZ is one way to accomplish this."

Craig Swilley, CEO of International Wood Group, said, "We fully support the development of a FLZ in Gulf, Franklin, Liberty, and Gadsden Counties. Improved logistics capability will benefit all companies in the region and will enhance economic development and employment opportunities."

*About the Four County Coalition*

*Gulf, Franklin, Liberty and Gadsden counties are part of Opportunity Florida, a Rural Area of Opportunity in northwest Florida. These counties work together throughout the region and with the Apalachee Regional Planning Council to align and promote their competitive assets to help existing businesses grow and to attract new employers to the region.*

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